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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000021

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SUBJECT: BASRAH ISF COMMANDER SAYS ISF NOT READY

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell H. Howard, Director, U.S. Regional Embassy  
Office, Basrah, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (c), (d)

¶1. (S/REL MCFI) Summary: Basrah Operations Commander, LTG Mohan Hafith Fahad al-Fariji told us that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in his command are not capable of confronting the militias given their lack of training and equipment. Mohan asked the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) to help by providing additional training before possibly integrating ISF into joint missions. Mohan also confirmed that he obtains intelligence from an independent network that he established. His network is already investigating lethal aid smuggling from Iran. Frustrated with the lack of logistical support, Mohan intimated that he would purchase black-market weapons if he could and even offered to help us acquire examples of what he believed are new Iranian supplied explosively formed penetrators (EFP). End Summary.

ISF NOT MISSION READY  
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¶2. (S/REL MCFI) Regional Embassy Officers (REO) met with Basrah Operations Commander, LTG Mohan Hafith Fahad al-Fariji, on February 19 and 23. In one meeting, we introduced CJSOTF members to Mohan so that CJSOTF could ask how Iraqi Special Operations and CJSOTF might integrate their capabilities with regular ISF to strike targets. Mohan doubted the ISF's ability to perform on joint operations, but suggested CJSOTF train the ISF up to that level. Mohan recommended starting with one or two platoons from each battalion in the 14th Division (IA) and gradually integrate ISF into joint operations. This would alleviate Mohan from overly relying on his most capable unit - 1/1/14 DIV (IA).

¶3. (S/NF) Mohan especially lamented how poorly trained (particularly in urban tactics) and equipped the IA was. He complained that the basic training UK forces provided was "too superficial," failed to prepare Iraqi soldiers to fight the militias, and that the British have exaggerated IA capabilities. Soldiers fired wildly, ran out of ammunition and then ran from battle. When it came to equipment, he said the militias seriously outgunned the IA and called it "suicide" for his soldiers to fight without having superior firepower. We stressed to Mohan that the Coalition was moving away from direct logistical support, that the central government had supplies,

and urged him to have his quartermasters requisition the equipment he needed. (Comment: MND-SE was pleased to hear that we reiterated the same message based on MNC-I guidance. End comment). CJSOTF agreed to look into possible training opportunities.

#### VIOLENCE IN BASRAH

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¶4. (S/REL MCFI) Mohan also confirmed reporting that there have been increased ISF and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) confrontations in downtown Basrah. He roundly dismissed speculation that these tensions were the result of ISF efforts to find the kidnapped CBS journalist, Richard Butler. Instead, Mohan claimed that JAM was violently responding to ISF "strong points" recently emplaced in key areas of Basrah. JAM was attacking the strong points and vehicle checkpoints nightly with heavy machine guns, RPGs, and even mortars.

#### MOHAN'S PRIVATE INTELLIGENCE

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¶5. (S/REL MCFI) In a February 10 meeting with Mohan's Ministry of Defense (MoD) Advisor, Majid al-Sari, we were told that Mohan had established an independent intelligence network. Mohan confirmed his network's existence to us and said it was helping him to identify militia caches and cell leaders. (Comment: Mohan has long decried the lack of reliable Iraqi and Coalition intelligence support to him. Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Command plans to form a fusion cell here, but Mohan's complaint that CTC is not effective is sour grapes because CTC would not be under his command. Given Mohan was once responsible for the military clandestine service during the former regime, he appears to have taken matters into his own hands. End comment.)

#### SMUGGLING CONTINUES

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¶6. (S/REL MCFI) Mohan also said he recently directed his sources to collect intelligence on the smuggling of lethal aid from

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Iran. He was currently compiling this information on a map, which he wants to share with us during our next meeting. He claimed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force brought lethal aid to the borders where marsh Arabs received it and then passed it off to the militias. A common method at the vehicle points of entry was using trucks carrying fish, which made it hard (and unpleasant) for the inspectors to search the vehicle.

#### LOOKING FOR BLACK MARKET SUPPLY SOURCES?

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¶7. (S/REL MCFI) According to Mohan, the arms markets in Basrah are fully stocked with mortars, PKCs, ammunition, RPG-7s, rockets (107, 122, 240mm), and EFPs. He noted that there are now four different types of EFPs - the newest version is called the "jumper" (because it is magnetized), is comprised of two separate parts, and each piece sells for \$700-1,000 USD. He quipped, "Because the IA is outgunned by the militias, do not be surprised if I go out and buy weapons from the Iranians on the black-market," but added that a lack of funds prevented him. During our second meeting, Mohan asked us if the USG is interested in having him purchase EFP samples for us on the black market.

¶8. (S/REL MCFI) Mohan's British military advisor later told us that Mohan had also discussed EFPs with MND-SE. However, MND-SE reports that Mohan seemed unfamiliar with even some of the basic components having confused a new timer with possibly the "jumper" EFP described above.

#### COMMENT

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¶9. (S/REL MCFI) Mohan's depiction of a weakened ISF is intended to secure additional training and equipment. Mohan believes that the current balance of power favors the militias and he is correct to believe so in our assessment, especially since the 14th IA DIV has not reached its full operational capability. To tip the scales in favor of the ISF, Mohan has recently

developed, with MND-SE assistance, a security plan (to be reported septel) to bolster the ISF, frighten the militias into submission, and if necessary confront and defeat them.

¶10. (S/REL MCFI) Mohan made a similar request last year after taking command, but the MoD and MoI did little to support him given personal rivalries between Mohan and some senior MoD leaders. To ensure Mohan's success this time around we will need to pressure the GOI into offering a full measure of assistance.

HHOWARD